Virgil J. Perez

March 26, 2012

Article Number: 1

Course CMP 230

Professor V. Harris M.ED.

Article URL: <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/26/us/cheney-heart-transplant-a-recent-decision.html?ref=health>

**Article Summary**

As we sat in class Saturday, former Vice President Dick Cheney had a heart transplant, after five heart attacks over the past 25 years and countless medical procedures to keep him alive. Cheney, 71, waited twenty months for his new heart, the gift of an unknown donor. Doctors say it is unlikely that the former Vice President got special treatment when he was given a new heart at age 71 that thousands of younger people also were in line to receive.

Still, his case reopens debate about whether rules should be changed to favor youth over age in giving out scarce organs. As it stands now, time on the waiting list, medical need and where you live determine the odds of scoring a new heart – not how many years you'll live to make use of it.

The ethical issues are not that he had a transplant, but who didn't? Cheney received the transplant Saturday at Inova Fairfax Hospital in Falls Church, Va., the same place where he received an implanted heart pump that has kept him alive since July 2010. The fact he waited such a long time shows he didn't get any favors.

**Article Reflection**

More than 3,100 Americans are waiting now for a new heart, and about 330 die each year before one becomes available. When one does, doctors check to see who is a good match and in highest medical need. The heart is offered locally, then regionally and finally nationally until a match is made.

Apparently no one can’t leapfrog the system, as It's a very regimented and fair process and heavily policed. However, this does not eliminate the fact that Cheney’s operation is not a hot topic. Patients can get on more than one transplant list if they can afford the medical tests that each center requires to ensure eligibility, and can afford to fly there on short notice if an organ becomes available.

Four factors determined when patients on the list received a heart transplant: body size or weight, blood type, how sick they are and how long they have been waiting. Based on those criteria, it is possible for a given patient to receive an organ ahead of others who have been waiting longer, because that patient is the right size or has a compatible blood type.

Cheney’s doctor confirmed that no exceptions had been made for his patient. “Nothing can be manipulated,” Dr. Reiner said. Cheney will have to take daily medicines to prevent rejection of his new heart and go through rehabilitation to walk and return to normal living. The inference to this case is to determine if in fact Cheney was not shown any “favoritism” even if he had to wait 20 months to get a new heart. I’m not so heartless in thinking otherwise.